



CITY OF COLUMBIA
WORK SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2013
2:00 P.M.
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET
2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Leona K. Plough, The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. Also present were Ms. Teresa B. Wilson, City Manager. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

1. [Employee Health Center and Benefits Update](#) – Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources thanked City Council and staff for taking an innovative approach to manage healthcare costs and providing wonderful benefits to employees and their dependents. She said the center improves the health and quality of life through regular preventative and immediate care for all employees. She presented the highlights of the first year's inception to include operational costs and savings. She outlined the benefits, which are eliminating co-pays for office visits and pharmacy prescriptions.

Councilor Plough asked if we are moving towards opening the center to all retirees.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources said the center is open to pre-65 retirees, because they are under our insurance plan. She said the center has not opened up to post 65 retirees due to additional insurance options such as Medicare.

Councilor Runyan said the fastest way to control costs is to reduce the risk pool internally. He said it's important to keep this in mind as we celebrate Lets Move! Columbia.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources said we are encouraging people to get healthier.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said providing health care for our employees has been a culture change.

Mayor Benjamin asked if the center can catch illnesses in the early stages before they become chronic.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources said the center is capable of catching diabetes and high blood pressure in the early stages. She said we are encouraging more employees to complete annual physicals and to focus on lifestyle changes such as eating habits.

Councilor Baddourah asked what programs are available to increase usage of the center.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources said several ideas have been discussed to increase usage, such as having a representative at new employee orientations, mailing post cards, airing public service announcements on Channel 2, and introducing the Health Center staff to departments to include lunch sessions with the doctor to answer questions about the center.

Councilor Baddourah asked about incentives to transfer prescriptions to the center.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, Director of Human Resources said the biggest incentive is that the center is free to all employees.

2. Financial Update – Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer gave an update on the City's credit ratings. He said the general rating graduated from a C+ to an AA rating.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said the one difference was using clear communication as to where we stand as a city and as an actual piece to financial management.

Mayor Benjamin said Mr. Palen is well commended and thought of in the public and private financial industries; the global view of him shows quite well.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer introduced Ms. Janice Alonso, Deputy Finance Director and Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director. He said they are the background piece of pulling all the information together.

Councilor Devine asked about the parking system rating.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said the ratings received are considered an investment grade. He said parking systems as a whole may not be an AA rating because many agencies are supported by the general fund. He said the City's parking system is self-supporting and the rating received was good.

Councilor Devine asked if there will be any changes in funds since we now have the City Center Garage.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said there are several contracts and new revenues that will be added to the parking system. He presented the ending numbers of June 30, 2013. He said it's unaudited and the numbers are subject to change. He gave an update on

the expenditures. He said there are a few departments with a surplus from the prior year due to budget management. He said we are building a stronger fund balance, which will help the budget going forward. He said an update will be provided in January when the audit is complete.

Councilor Plaugh commented on the Public Works savings of \$1.2 million.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said a big part of the savings came from fuel reserves.

Mayor Benjamin asked about a people's budget to communicate the fiscal management policies and practices of the city more effectively to citizens.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said we provide a newsletter that has more commentary information about the budget. She said we are working on a dashboard picture of the budget for citizens to review.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer gave an update on the water and sewer revenues. He said the total surplus is \$23million; it will be added to the cash system. He said an approximate amount of cash will be evaluated to have on hand for future projects.

Councilor Plaugh asked if the city approved the use of \$20 million for the next five (5) years.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said yes; it is coming out of the annual amount of revenues.

Councilor Devine asked about using low interest rates to increase funding for future projects.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said we will look at more options. He gave an update on the parking systems revenues. He said the surplus is \$509,000.

Councilor Baddourah asked if pending contracts affect the numbers.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said no.

Councilor Plaugh asked about the reduction of debt.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Chief Financial Officer said it's a reflection of the interest rate. He clarified that if an interest rate is associated on a bond with an ongoing project; then it will be capitalized so it can be recognized later through depreciation. He presented an outline for the monthly financial reporting. He proposed that the monthly reports be posted on the website prior to the meetings.

3. ****Presentation to City Council – Mr. Satch Krantz, Riverbanks Zoo & Gardens**

Mr. Satch Krantz, Riverbanks Zoo & Gardens presented the Mayor and the members of Council with a copy of the “Coffee Table History Book”, which was published by the University of South Carolina as a token of the 40th Anniversary of the Riverbanks Zoo & Gardens.

4. [Fiscal Year 2013 / 2014 General Capital Projects](#) – Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget Director

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget Director gave an update on part two of the Fiscal Year 2013/2014 General Capital Projects. She said the purpose of capital projects programming is to develop an orderly schedule to the expenditure of city funds on major improvements. The objective is to maintain the city’s assets at parks, on sidewalks, streets, and police and fire stations to include other equipment usage. She said the capital budget is discrete from the city’s operational budget and typically includes more buildings than infrastructure. Funding has been appropriated for the approved projects. She said capital outlays, which are individual physical assets, are capped at \$5,000. She noted that the common resources used for general capital projects include: general, hospitality tax, liquor rebate, general obligation bonds and grant funds. She said the revenues used for enterprise projects are generated through the water and sewer, parking system and storm water system. She said future projects will be in line with the city’s strategic plan and Build Columbia principles.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said we have prioritized capital projects based on need.

Councilor Davis asked about the Busby Street project.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said funding was allocated for the design this fiscal year; additional funding for the construction will be allocated next fiscal year.

Council Devine asked that this information be available to the community.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said this is a part of the HUD close out and the City Attorney is working on the deed.

Councilor Davis asked if there is a master plan for the area.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said there is a design team in place.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director presented staff’s recommendations for prioritizing general capital improvement projects.

Mayor Benjamin asked about the Belvedere project.

Councilor Newman said it was in the previous budget.

Mayor Benjamin said the outline is a very good list of priorities. He said the quality life improvements associated with the Busted Plug shouldn't be prioritized over some of the necessary improvements such as Woodland Park, Hampton Park and Sims Park. He encouraged staff to move these projects up before the Busted Plug.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager clarified that the Busted Plug is not included in the recommendations.

Councilor Devine asked about incorporating green infrastructure at Finlay Park.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said this can be considered during the planning phase.

Councilor Runyan asked what is included in the renovations at Finlay Park.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said we don't have the actual specifics; the infrastructure is in bad condition and the pond needs major repairs to include repairs to the drainage system.

Councilor Runyan asked if the cost for renovations is a conservative estimate.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said we have given it our best estimate; once we incorporate the design engineers, we will have a more specific cost for the renovations.

Councilor Davis asked if the pond has a liner or natural flooring.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said it has liner.

Councilor Davis asked if the liner is necessary to complete the renovation.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said yes.

Councilor Runyan clarified that the liner is needed to avoid evaporation and percolation in the ground; it helps with losing water.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said with the conservative estimate, we are aiming to present hard numbers before issuing the Hospitality Bond.

Councilor Plough suggested that staff look at the original master plan for Finlay Park; it's hard to estimate what is needed without looking at the appropriate use of the park. She asked staff to present a maintenance plan.

Mayor Benjamin asked what it will take to complete all of the renovations.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we are leveraging the \$50,000 as outlined to include grant funding; this will complete the design portion in phase II; the grant or the penny tax can be used for construction.

Councilor Devine said the RFP for the streets master plan will be back in December; the plan will look at five (5) citywide pedestrian accesses; and it will link the entire Vista Greenway to include the Drew Wellness Center and Bull Street.

Councilor Baddourah suggested that a public input session be scheduled to determine the future appearance for the park to include adding a nature playground and fencing.

Councilor Devine asked if Finlay Park is a part of the Genesis plan.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said no; the plan identified the things needed for improving the condition of our existing facilities; Finlay Park was identified as a need for a park improvement.

Councilor Plough asked if funding was set aside for the design.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said no.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director presented the recommendations for the Clyburn Golf Center and Driving Range, which is to add safety fencing and netting to the facility. She said funding for the Woodland Park tennis courts will be matched with some existing project funding; it will allow the Parks and Recreation Department to demolish and abate eight (8) courts and replace them with six (6) constructive fence courts. She said that funding for Hampton Park renovations was identified through parks renovations; it will help with ADA accessibility and other building compliance matters to include redesigning the kitchen and restrooms.

Councilor Plough asked for input regarding the renovation of Hampton Park.

Mr. Jeff Caton, Director of Parks and Recreation said the building assessment is not worth the renovations. He said we will achieve the outcome of addressing ADA accessibility and compliance issues, but we will probably fall short of the community expectations.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said if the department moves forward with a new building, we will be looking into future budgets and fiscal years to begin the project.

Councilor Devine asked about the cost of the design.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Director of Parks and Recreation said depending on the total cost; it's an average of 6% to 8% of the construction costs.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said we have some success with architects when a design is used from previous projects; it's not the builders first choice, but they will reuse the plans.

Councilor Devine said if the funds are in the current budget for the parks then it needs to be secured so that there is no misunderstanding.

Councilor Baddourah said there were times when money was allocated and was used for something else; we need to keep the money allocated for the new building.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said from staff's perspective, we wanted to identify the short-term goals to move forward with; if it's the will of Council, we can put the money towards a new building.

Councilor Plough asked about the cost of the new buildings at South Edisto and Rosewood Parks.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said it cost approximately \$600,000; it was built two (2) years ago; it wasn't the same kind of facility.

Councilor Baddourah asked if the costs include the playground.

Mr. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said yes.

An unidentified male said we are going down the right track with this project; this is the direction the neighborhood wants; and we are willing to work with the Parks and Recreation Department to continue with the process.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director presented the budget for Sims Park playground equipment.

Councilor Devine asked for an update on all the parks that are in need of playground equipment.

Mr. Jeff Caton, Parks and Recreation Director agreed to provide the assessment section of the master plan.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said the Animal Shelter building will be demolished and rebuilt.

Councilor Runyan asked if the goal of rebuilding a shelter is in line with being a No-Kill city.

Mr. Robert Anderson, Director of Public Works said the No-Kill shelter can be built on the original footprint; there was an expansion room to shelter animals longer.

Councilor Runyan said let's keep this goal in perspective as we move forward.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director presented the budget for phase two of the Vista Greenway design project from Taylor Street to Elmwood Avenue. She presented the budget for the Street Division. She said the annual funding will be matched with state funding to help with road maintenance and the resurfacing of sidewalks.

Councilor Plaugh asked if \$100,000 was allocated in last year's budget for resurfacing.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said no.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Baddourah and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to use \$1,922,374 to implement projects as outlined except Finlay Park and the Busted Plug and to allocate the remaining \$27,000 to Hampton Park for the rebuilding of the building. Mr. Davis was not present for the vote.

5. [Hospitality Taskforce Update / Extended Hours Permits](#)

Major Melron Kelly, Columbia Police Department said the Hospitality Taskforce Team is a function of the Police Department Community Services Division, which is in collaboration with the Business License Division, Zoning Department, the Fire Marshal's Office and the Columbia Police Department. Currently, four (4) officers are assigned in the division. He said the primary goal is encouraging and developing proactive partnerships with existing businesses and developing a safe environment in each district, which includes: enforcing underage drinking laws, smoking ban, ordinances and fire code violations. He said there were four (4) extended hour ordinance violations last quarter involving 620, 636, 801 and 805 Harden Street.

Councilor Devine asked if only Five Points was checked in the last quarter.

Major Melron Kelly, Columbia Police Department said it was a citywide check. He said we have twenty-four (24) businesses with extended operating hour permits and these were the ones found in violation.

Councilor Plaugh asked if there were any underage drinking violations at the businesses.

Major Melron Kelly, Columbia Police Department said no.

Councilor Baddourah asked Major Kelly to explain the procedure.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said the permits start in July and it's renewed annually in June. He said they check each report to see if the businesses were contributors to any incidents.

Councilor Baddourah asked if it has to be the same violation or something different.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said there is a three strike rule: the first violation consists of a warning letter; the second violation contains more stipulations with security; and you're out on the third violation.

Councilor Devine said the violations are for extended hours. She asked if there are other violations that relate to businesses.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said yes.

Councilor Newman asked if other steps are taken to ensure that bars without permits are not operating after 2 a.m.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said the team conducts regular compliance checks; if they see a business operating after 2 a.m., a fine is dispensed.

Councilor Plough asked if a business can continue to operate if it's in violation; does the ordinance need tweaking.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said the ordinance is setup to recycle back in July; the team keeps rotation notes to make sure a business is not being checked too many times. He said we have a small team and we are looking to expand the team to help complete more compliance checks. He said the team was formed to address the evening hours in the hospitality districts.

Mayor Benjamin said the hospitality team is working hard with the tools they have at their disposal; the majority of the businesses are in Five Points and the ordinance is working; let's exercise more enforcements in these districts.

Councilor Davis asked if we can take the pressure off the hospitality team and enforce violations to the businesses that are not in the districts.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said yes; the patrol officers have the authority to exercise enforcement. He said they look at the reports as a whole; not just the hospitality enforcement team reports; it's the entire police department.

Councilor Devine said we need to recognize that this is not an isolated taskforce; it's law enforcement; this requires a concerted effort; all departments are encouraged to work together to address the concerns.

Councilor Newman asked about the interaction with the businesses and if the right tools are in place for areas other than Five Points.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Interim Police Chief said we have not taken manpower from any part of the city to deal with the concerns in Five Points. The hospitality team has been effective in each district and our primary goal is to develop partnerships with businesses.

6. Long-Term Solutions for the Drop off of Ex-Detainees from the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center – *This item was withdrawn from the agenda.*

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 5:38 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 7** through **9**.

7. Receipt of legal advice which relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
8. Discussion of negotiations incident to the proposed sale of property – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
9. ****Discussion of the employment of an employee – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.***

- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 6:05 p.m. to convene the regular meeting.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore
City Clerk